

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3403

February 7, 2003

Captain Davina French
957th Multirole Bridge Company
North Dakota Army National Guard
P.O. Box 5511
Bismarck, ND 58506-5511

Dear Captain French:

I regret that I am not able to join you to honor the outstanding men and women – and families – of the 957th Bridge Company of the North Dakota Army National Guard. I have asked Maj. Gen. Haugen to read this letter in my place.

North Dakota has a relatively small population but since statehood has repeatedly made a big difference in the defense of our nation. During World War I and the Korean War, the service rate of North Dakotans was among the highest of any state. North Dakota ranked second and third in World Wars I and II, respectively, in the percentage of our men in uniform who, as Abraham Lincoln put it, “gave the last full measure of devotion” in defense of liberty. During the Vietnam era, North Dakota had the highest percentage of any state (21 percent) of eligible Americans who served. North Dakota’s major military installations at Minot and Grand Forks stood unfailingly for nearly four decades at the front lines of the Cold War and today are more vital to American global conventional power projection than ever.

Today, North Dakota ranks in the top third in the number of citizens per capita in uniform. But we rank number one in National Guard participation per capita. Many of our National Guard personnel, unlike in some of our nation’s previous conflicts, are women. And more of our troops have families than ever before.

Thomas Jefferson famously said that “the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.” Here in our communities, as call-ups put professional plans on hold and put new pressure on families, we are reminded that “eternal vigilance” sometimes means great sacrifice. But it also is a source of great pride. The performance of North Dakota’s military personnel has been exemplary – and vitally important to America – since the terrorist attacks of last September 11th.

Concern about additional terrorist attacks here in America and crises in the Persian Gulf and on the Korean Peninsula dominate the news. But there is no question that the outstanding men and women of North Dakota’s Guard and Reserve units will make us proud yet again.

As Senator for North Dakota, a proud supporter of our Armed Forces, and an American, I salute you, and assure you that the hopes and prayers of all North Dakotans go with you. Thank you for your commitment to our nation in its time of need. Your selfless service and sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kent Conrad". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kent" and last name "Conrad" clearly distinguishable.

KENT CONRAD
United States Senate

KC:wdsr